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UNCLAS MUSCAT 000294

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/ARPI (TROBERTS), NEA/PPD (CWHITTLESEY), NEA/P  
(FFINVER), INR/R/MR  
LONDON FOR GOLDRICH  
PARIS FOR ZEYA  
USCENTCOM FOR PLUSH  
FOREIGN PRESS CENTER/ASILAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [OIIP](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM, LEBANON, AND IRAQI STREET NAMES

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Is Iran The New Iraq?  
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[1](#)1. On February 20, the privately-owned Arabic daily "Al-Watan" carried an editorial entitled, "Distribution of Roles":

"In recent statements, the American administration denied the accusation that they are going to use military force against Iran in an effort to stop what they term 'military nuclear activity.' According to Washington, nuclear activity is a threat to the stability and security of the region and to international peace. President Bush stated that he is not excluding military options in dealing with Tehran but prefers seeking diplomatic solutions first, and qualified this policy by stating any American president must consider using military force as an alternative. This means that there will be yet another rift among Western powers: between those seeking a diplomatic method of convincing Iran to abandon its nuclear program, and those who seek to use force to advance the agenda of nuclear disarmament."

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Supporting Lebanon  
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[1](#)2. The government-owned Arabic daily "Oman" published an editorial on February 21 entitled, "Lebanon at the Crossroads":

"Lebanon has entered into another complicated political stage as a result of the assassination of former Prime Minister Hariri. Because of Hariri's sudden death, tensions are heightening between the government and the opposition. Syria is being pressured by the Americans to withdraw from Lebanon, which further complicates matters for the Lebanese government. Beirut must unite all Lebanese society in an effort to defeat any plans aimed at destroying the security and the stability of Lebanon. If we -- the Arab world -- do not support Lebanon, the escalation of the current situation will only serve to worsen its condition."

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Where The Streets Have No (Iraqi) Name  
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[1](#)3. On the same day, "Al-Watan" also published an editorial entitled, "Americans Renaming Iraqi Streets":

"Despite the success of the Iraqi elections, it seems that the Americans have forgotten the horrific attacks and assaults perpetrated against Iraqis, especially those held in Abu Ghraib prison. How are the Iraqi people supposed to view the new American Mission in Baghdad if its first initiative is to Americanize the names of historic Iraqi parks and public spaces? This seems totally useless and a poor place to start in the reconstruction of a new Iraq. Why not focus on rebuilding the destroyed infrastructure in Iraq, or work toward a new domestic policy that helps Iraqis who have been displaced during the war? Is Iraq really a sovereign nation, or just the newest American colony?"

BALTIMORE